creasingly difficult to run people off that won't leave!

You notice that he raises the question as to whether we really want to be a first century church. Really, we don't fit the first century any better than the twentieth. Somebody has suggested we are second century!

It seems that the Churches of Christ are growing while becoming unglued. Several preachers have joined our free and open discussion group. One has been fired, not for speaking in tongues, but because he has restudied his former position. I hope you continue toward positive contribution in the confusion we now find ourselves in. —*Ohio*

We had a sign up not too long ago on our highway billboard that read, "The church of God is the church of Christ," and "The church of God meets here."—*Tennessee*

I have never met you, but I appreciate you far more than you will ever know. When I read your periodical each month, I am heartened again that maybe there is hope for the Church of Christ after all. May God bless you and yours.—*Houston*

There is a positive ring about these letters, which are similar to numerous others, confirming the conclusion of the last excerpt that "There is hope for the Church of Christ after all." Things are changing with us, and for the most part it is for the better. We *are* becoming unglued, even when getting unglued means getting fired. And how about our folk erecting a sign reading "The church of God meets here." That is surely a *first* even for these changing times.

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RESTORATION REVIEW

The New Humanity . . .

THE NEW CONFIDENCE

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. Heb. 10:35

A survey was made among high school and college students in order to discover what they considered their most serious personal problem. The results revealed that "a lack of confidence" was the most serious weakness that these young people recognized in their own personal lives. And what a wreck this can make of one's life, from whatever angle one views it. Whether in terms of his life's work, his marriage, his relations with others, or his anticipation of the future, it is all a dreadful experience without confidence in oneself and in the very substance of life.

This essay is concerned especially with that confidence that only the Lord can give, that *spiritual* confidence referred to above, which, according to the writer to the Hebrews has great reward. A lack of such assurance is surely a terrible malady within God's community in our time. We hear references to the high level of mental illness among us, but we have other symptoms of a vacuous religion that are more widespread. Many of us are simply bored with life, and our jobs and families are about as exciting to us as a donkey ride through a desert. Joy is all too rare, and a bright confidence and quiet optimism are seldom seen. There is, moreover, an uneasiness and uncertainty about our spiritual well-being, for most of us are not even sure that we are saved.

Religion should be life's greatest adventure. Religion is indeed life itself. Something is seriously wrong when it is a drag upon us, when it makes us restive and unsure, and when it is a duty to perform rather than a joy to be shared. We reveal more than we might suppose when we equivocate in reply to such a question as *Are you saved?,* which isn't being asked in this materialistic age as much as it used to.

Why cannot our people respond in a cry of joy, "Yes, indeed I'm saved, and praise the Lord for it"? It may be because we *really* believe in a salvation by works, despite all our denials. If our works are in order and if we have recently enough prayed that insipid prayer "Forgive me of all my unforgiven sins," then we might feel some assurance. But we must become

a people who *know,* who are bold and confident in their salvation.

We should never tire of Paul's words in Gal. 2, where he says: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." That sounds like a man who *knows.* And such a man can talk about joy and peace with real meaning: "Rejoice in the Lord, again I say rejoice."

This is what we are calling the *new* confidence, which characterizes the New Humanity that we have in the Christ. The old system under Moses and the moral law of the Gentiles served to discipline the people and to give them an assurance of sorts, but those of us who share in the New Humanity realize how inadequate such systems were and what a difference Jesus makes.

Socrates is an example of one whose soul was disciplined by the moral law, and one whose search for truth brought him a sense of divine mission that few people ever realize. But Socrates did not have the Christ, and what a difference this makes! There was an assurance about Socrates that made all of Athens his schoolroom, and he portrayed a boldness that challenged all of the vain philosophies of his time. And there was even that quiet assurance that he was called of God to be a troublesome gadfly to the complacent Greeks. Yet there was a void in Socrates. In the hour of his death he makes reference to a sacrifice he had made to a god, as if there might be *some* virtue to the emptiness of Greek religion that he had spent his life criticizing. But Socrates could not *know* as Paul knew, for there was no Damascus experience for him.

King Hezekiah is a good example of the limitations of the Mosaic system, for in his confrontation with death his religion did not sustain him. He was one of those kings who "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done," and surely God used him in a wonderful way in the history of Israel, especially at the time God's people were threatened by the Assyrian invasion under Sennecherib. It was the spiritual leadership of Hezekiah that brought victory to Israel.

But the king faltered in the face of death. Isaiah tells the story of how the Lord sent him to Hezekiah with this message: "Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order; for you shall die, you shall not recover." That is a harsh message indeed, but it would not have disturbed one with the hope of the apostle Paul, who even expressed a desire that death might come and hurry him along into the presence of Christ. But it frightened and discouraged Hezekiah, and he reacted as one who had nothing to sustain him through the valley of death.

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The king turned his face to the wall and wept bitterly, reminding the Lord how faithful he had been and asking if his life might be spared. The Lord granted a stay of death, and fifteen years were added to Hezekiah's life. It is doubtful that this was best for him, for the years that followed brought further testing from the Lord, which only revealed the pride of the king, which in turn set the stage for the Babylonian invasion and the captivity of God's people. So the lesson may teach us that it is best to let God determine our days.

The point that we are making, however, is that in the crucial experiences of life the Christ makes all the difference in the world. Hezekiah did not have Jesus to assure him in the hour of trial. He had Moses and the prophets, and these he heard, but he knew nothing of the New Humanity. His was a limited assurance. The *new* confidence was not yet available to men.

Those who lived before Christ, whether Jews or Greeks, could not have had that "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf" which can be true only of the New Humanity. The tragedy is that even Christians let such a confidence slip from them. The charge in Heb. 10:35 is therefore in order: *Do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.*

The context in which that admonition was given indicates the basis of the Christian's assurance. Reference is made to how they had suffered: they endured a hard struggle with sufferings, being exposed to abuse and affliction; they had joyfully accepted the plundering of their property. Then it says, " . . . since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one." This is why they should be confident.

Might this suggest that a life of ease and prosperity more of a problem to the Christian than persecution and adversity. Difficulties tend to unite people, while persecutions cause them to be mutually sympathetic and helpful. It is amidst prosperity that we grow cold toward each other. Ease hurts us far more than trouble ever could.

The new confidence of which we speak does not come through being doctrinally "sound" or by having "the truth," as these ideas are usually understood. One may be unsure of any number of his interpretations of scripture, and yet be fully convinced of his relationship to Jesus. He may be void of "the truth" in reference to that long list of things that divide us, and yet be bold in his assurance that Jesus is his. He does not have to be right about everything to sing *Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!*

What kind of a people are we when we will sing a song of the blessed assurance, and then turn around and speak with uncertainty about our salvation?—*the Editor*

The young lady I am telling you about was to be graduated from Texas Woman's University this spring. She was an English major who was taking work in Education as well, preparing to be an English teacher. The time was Friday morning, April 17, the day Apollo 13 was due for its splashdown. Having driven to a university parking lot from a nearby town with another student, the future teacher decided to wait for her next class in the car so that she could keep tab on the returning astronauts.

Two hours later her body was found on a lonely county road. She had been brutally beaten and then run over again and again by the very automobile in which she had been peacefully waiting, which was found abandoned a few miles away.

Denton is yet small enough and quiet enough to be shocked over such an event. Campus and city police went to work on an around-the-clock schedule in an effort to come up with some leads in a case that seemed to have no clues. There did not seem to be any motive, for she was neither robbed or sexually abused.

The city was further shocked when the police arrested two boys, students in Denton High School, for the murder. They were taken into custody as they stepped from a school bus, books in hand!

Rumors had it that the brutal slaying of a lovely college girl must have been done by Negroes. Or hoodlums from Dallas' eastside. Or some demented soul on the loose from an institution. But it turned out that they were clean-faced white boys from our own high school, products of Denton's upper middle-class. They are in fact our neighbors, living just a few blocks from us.

Three sets of parents are immersed in grief. Two boys are in the city jail, held without bond, awaiting an early trial. The district attorney says he'll ask for the death penalty. An innocent girl, full of life and hope, is now in her grave. And a peaceful college town is humbler than before. Now they are saying *even* of Denton: "Well, if one can't sit in a car on a college parking lot in broad daylight . . ."

In 1968 President Johnson asked Milton Eisenhower to head a committee of 200 scholars and researchers to study violence and crime in this nation. The result of the committee's findings is now in book form, entitled *To Establish Justice, To Insure Domestic Tranquility.*

Some of the information is staggering. In the past seven years our population has increased about ten percent, while crime has increased eighty-eight percent. The "brutal society" that now disturbs the core cities is making its way into the affluent suburbs. We are fast becoming "an armed camp of 200 million Americans living in fear."

Other recent studies on crime suggest that if effective steps are not taken now that gang killings and presidential assassinations will become commonplace. One book, *The Urban Guerrilla,* predicts that a city-based revolt all across our nation is in the

offering. They all seem to be saying that things will get worse in terms of crime and violence before they get better.

Each of us who professes to be a Christian must ask himself what he can do amidst this national emergency. The answer is certainly not easy, for the problem is so monstrous that it seems far beyond our limited capacity. But part of the answer is evident: *it is time for concern.* And if enough of us become sufficiently concerned, more of the answer will be forthcoming. An uneasy conscience will move us toward solutions, but most of us dislike being disturbed. James Reston, the columnist, recently commented that Americans are better about committing crime than in reading about it. Even Christians don't want to be bothered. "Why read a study on crime? I can't do anything about it, anyway," we are tempted to say to ourselves.

Lincoln said something about our country being safe so long as the people have the facts. But facts can be painful, and we choose sometimes, for the sake of comfort, to remain in ignorance. This cannot be the Christian's alternative. We are slow of heart to believe that when the nation is in trouble *we* are in trouble.

We are all impressed with what Art Linkletter is doing about the dope problem. It shows what a concerned man can do. He is arousing parents as they have never been aroused. If a tragedy in his own family could motivate him to such efforts, should not God's community in the United States be aroused to action when the nation's crime is increasing ten times the rate of its population? One statement that Linkletter makes in his speeches over the country points a finger at us all: it is not so much the dope pushers that are the problem, but it is the *apathy* of the American people that is the problem.

Our own congregations are as apathetic as any portion of our society. If one of our preachers gets off the beaten path of "first principles," we get uneasy that he might be preaching a *social* gospel—as if the gospel of Jesus could be anything other than social! While we are content to obligate future generations with million dollar edifices in the suburbs, the inner-city that we have left behind are aflame with hate and resentment. Most of the Lord's money we spend on ourselves, our own comforts and our own denominational promotions, while we look to the government to take care of the down and outs.

Concern, real heartfelt concern, is the first step toward a solution, for somehow the concerned person finds some way to express his concern. An example that comes to my mind is the story of one of my white colleagues at Bishop College in Dallas. For years he longed to go to Africa as a teaching missionary. When such a door did not open, he entered the door that did open. He became a teacher in a black college, which has proved to be his "Africa." He is a teacher that expects his students to work for their grades, an academic virtue that is becoming increasingly rare these days. Black colleges are especially notorious for handing out grades without commensurate performance on the part of

the students. The professor believes that he can help move Negroes along to the first class citizenship that they talk about by making demands of them in the classroom.

Sometime back he was approached after class by a young lady who had a low grade marked on her test paper. She wanted to know why. The professor explained that low grades usually follow low output of effort. "You white sonofabitch," she said scathingly, "the only reason you teach here is because you can't teach anywhere else." She continued to curse and berate him.

As he related the story to me, I presumed that he would go on to tell me that he reported her attack to the dean and that she was summarily disciplined for her rudeness. "I just kept on loving her," he explained. "Then one day she came to my office and we had a nice talk. She's friendly now and is doing better work."

That professor in his own way, in his own little corner, found a way to combat crime and violence in this country. And his source of power is the greatest force in the world: *love.* But we can't just say to folk that they are to go out and love and thus heal the world's wounds. Each must find, under God, his own way of implementing love. But it must begin by our being where the action is, and that happens only when we are concerned. Most of us are not going to be cursed by "the bad element" for the simple reason that we are not amongst them.

If we follow our Lord, he will lead us into the troubled spots. That is where he did his work. It is pertinent to ask ourselves if we really know the Jesus who kept company with society's untouchables. Unless people dress right, smell right, and talk right we do not cotton to them. And so it is "proper folk" that make up our congregations. Would Jesus, the Galilean revolutionary, really be welcome among us? And in our vision of him do we not remake him into our image? It is hard for us to realize that, according to middle-class American standards, he was *not* a nice man.

But he was a concerned man, and it is concerned men that change the world.—*the Editor*

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A GENTLEMAN

One sure mark of a gentleman is that he does not impose himself upon others. Because of the innate selfishness that they have to overcome, it is a difficult lesson to teach children. The infant cries at all hours of the day or night, wholly unconcerned as to who loses how much sleep. The childhood years are not much better, for it is a rather long story of imposition. It takes a lot of training to cultivate a gentleman. Something like growing an oak to maturity.

There is a young mother in our neighborhood that the children all love. She is among the first to see a new bike, the first pair of long pants, and the report cards on report card day. She gets in on all the juvenile adventures, from a girl scout outing to a family fishing expedition. We could say that being an airline pilot's wife she has time for such things, but it is more accurate to say that she has learned to love children. But still kids should be taught not to impose, even on people who seem not to mind.

Our little Phoebe is trying out for the school choir. Yes, you guessed it. She was soon auditioning before the dear young mother who has learned to bear all things. And to bear with Phoebe in her solos is to go far beyond the duty of being a good neighbor. I would gently suggest to Phoebe: "That is fine, but you must learn not to impose yourself on people." It is such a hard lesson to teach. It is equally hard to learn. I find myself imposing on others, such as invading their privacy, which a man still has even when he sits next to me on an airplane. Or on the highway when I carelessly fail to dim my car lights or follow the car ahead too closely. A man often imposes on his wife by causing her to pick up after him or by making unreasonable demands.

I constantly urge our Benjy and Philip that their first lesson in life is to learn to take care of themselves. Don't do it if you have to be a burden on somebody. Pay your own way. Carry your own load. Make it a rule in life not to get into a situation where somebody else has to take care of you. It is far better to take care of somebody else than for somebody else to take care of you. We are often reading the *Proverbs,* which constantly warn of the hazards of imposing on others. That includes the girls, I tell them. No gentleman ever imposes himself upon a woman for her attentions. It includes talking to people. It includes asking for things.

In all such efforts in teaching this aspect of the good life we have a noble illustration of the gentleman. The Holy Spirit is the perfect gentleman. Despite all that he has to offer, regardless of all the gifts he has to bestow, he never imposes himself on anyone. It is a delightful lesson to be learned. It may well be that in learning of the Spirit's complete unwillingness to impose his goodness upon the reluctant we will correct some of the abuses now prevalent.

The Spirit is an activist, an *extreme* activist. All through the scriptures we find him doing, doing, doing. He is short on theory, long on practice. Nearly all activists impose both their person and their ideas on others, but not the Holy Spirit. He is the one activist who always knocks, and he has no interest in getting a foot in the door. When the door is opened wide and there is an obvious welcome, he will enter. Even then he works quietly. He has no gift of gab and he is no super salesman.

The Alcoholics Anonymous have learned this lesson better than any humanitarian organization I know of. They never impose what they have to offer on anyone. They don't bother with lectures. They are too busy practicing what others preach. One lady called the A. A. in behalf of her

alcoholic husband, only to be told: "Madam, he'll have to call and ask us to help him." The Holy Spirit works that way. We should dispense with the idea that the Holy Spirit is pounding away on the outside of us trying to get in, like a spoiled dog running from door to window trying to get back into the house.

A look at some of the things the Holy Spirit does for folk, and the way he does them, will confirm the point. A magnificent instance of what he does for us is in Rom. 8:26: "The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not know how we ought to pray, but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us, and God who searches our inmost being knows what the Spirit means, because he pleads for God's people in God's own way."

Here we see the Spirit as an activist, and doesn't the *New English Bible* make it clearer what the Spirit does for us in the context of prayer? It is when we are weak, when we realize that we must have help beyond ourselves, that the Spirit comes to our aid. In our faltering, stumbling efforts to pray to God in our agony the Spirit pleads for us "through our inarticulate groans" in God's own way. God understands what the Spirit is saying when he takes our fumbling utterances and pleads for us in our weakness. What a beautiful truth this is!

But the Spirit is reluctant to come to one's aid in such a manner if he is self-reliant and is unaware of any such need. There are people who are "so full of the Book" that they experience no such weakness as is talked about here. The Holy Spirit helps *weak* people. The strong move along on their own resources. A gentleman never imposes himself upon the strong; he rather yields himself to the cry of the weak.

In Eph. 1:17 Paul speaks of God giving us "the spiritual powers of wisdom and vision, by which there comes the knowledge of him." He goes on to say: "I pray that your inward eyes may be illumined, so that you may know what is the hope to which he calls you, what the wealth and glory of the share he offers you among his people in their heritage, and how vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him."

What a thing this is that the Holy Spirit does for us—if we want him to. It sounds like the hidden manna that Jesus promised to the congregation at Pergamum, or to the bread that our Lord had to eat that the disciples knew not of. There is within all of us the potential for subjective insight as well as objective sight. The "inward eyes" refers to the human spirit that is capable of communing with the Holy Spirit, as Rom. 8:16 indicates: "In that cry the Spirit of God joins with our spirit in testifying that we are God's children."

It is when we really hunger and thirst for the resources of his power, when we really want to know God, that the Spirit enlightens our inner eyes so that we might see in a new dimension. The Spirit does his work on men who have "humble and contrite hearts," to use Isaiah's description, who assures us that God looks

with favor on this kind of man (Isa. 66:2). Or as Paul puts it in Gal. 5:5: "For to us, our hope of attaining that righteousness which we eagerly await is the work of the Spirit through faith." The Spirit serves those who *eagerly await* his blessings. There is an important relationship between man's "want to" and the Spirit's function.

Then there is "the harvest of the Spirit," which according to Paul's list in Gal. 5:22 is ninefold: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. Here we have a description of the new humanity, the new man in Christ. He is born of the Spirit and thus bears his likeness. These are not virtues that we are to try to cultivate in our lives, but are rather the Spirit's harvest in us once we yield to his leading. Notice that *gentleness* is one of them, and what a precious gift that is in our ruthless world. And what better way is there to become gentle than by associating with a gentleman?

So it is with all that the Spirit does for us. He fills us, seals us, leads us, dwells within us, gives us new life, prays for us, reveals things to us, enlightens us, manifests God's love through us. No wonder Paul could write: "the Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink" (1 Cor. 12:13); and then he urges us to get drunk at that fountain (Eph. 5:18).

But in all this there is no imposition on the Spirit's part. He remains the perfect gentleman all the way through. But someone may insist that the Spirit does indeed take the initiative and forces his way into our lives even when we do not want him. "After all does not 1 Thess. 5:19 tell us not to quench the Spirit," someone may say, "and does not this mean that he is trying to work in us and we won't let him?"

Hardly. In urging the Thessalonians to "Quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesying," he is telling them not to interfere with the Spirit's work in *others* in the congregation. As the NEB puts it: "Do not stifle inspiration." Or as Paul puts it in 1 Cor. 14:39: "Do not forbid speaking in tongues." The Spirit does not *force* light upon anyone, nor will he *make* folk speak in tongues. But when such gifts are possible in a congregation we are not to adopt such an attitude about it as to dampen a brother's zeal and thus quench the Spirit's work in his life.

In our area Delta Airlines advertises on the radio with a ditty that goes *Delta is ready when you are!* It is catchy, and it gets the idea across that a plane is *waiting* to fly you to New Orleans or Miami, whenever you are ready. But it does not suggest that the Delta officials are going to kidnap passengers and force them into their planes. Delta is ready whenever we are. We have no right to ask more. So it is with the Holy Spirit. He is ready when we are. He may have opened Lydia's heart, leading to her conversion, as we are told in Acts 16, but it was because Lydia was ready for such an experience. She had turned the knob on her side of the door.

The implications of the thesis of this article are far-reaching, for if the Spirit does not impose himself to what

extent are we to do so? Religion is a very personal thing, and for the most part my attitude should be "to each his own," and I should practice the fine art of minding my own religion. It is noteworthy that Jesus never appears to have any desire for people to accept what he says because he says it. He wants them to think for themselves and to relate what he says to their own needs, each in his own way. He certainly was no dogmatist who insists that everyone see a thing his way. It was so with Socrates and with Ghandi, and all the great teachers who influenced multitudes. They never imposed their ideas on others. They testified to what God meant to them, and to the truth as they saw it, but never in a dogmatic or arbitrary way. The great teachers have all sought to unite men, but never to conform them to their own views. It was a unity in diversity, not conformity, that they sought.

Ours has hardly been a gentleman's religion. We argue it, defend it, and debate it far more than we live it. We may never admit to forcing it on others, but our attitude often amounts to that. A Quaker working in a foreign country in some humble task for peace was asked a rather novel question by one of the officials of that country: "Why don't you people preach what you practice?" No one will ever ask us anything like that, for we have lots of theory, lots of talk, lots of preach, lots of judging of others. It is the practice of the golden rule that we are short on.

It is my sacred duty to reverence your own unique relationship to Jesus. It is true that some things are better felt than told. And besides, you are not obligated to tell me about it anyway. True, if you have learned something that you think would be of help to me, then you should share it with me, and let it go at that. Leave it to me to make what use of it I may. It may or may not effect me in the same way as it did you. But still I can love you for sharing it with me, and I can esteem it as something genuine in your own life.

Jesus tells us: "Do not give dogs what is holy; do not throw your pearls to the pigs" (Mt. 7:6). Your own precious experiences in Jesus may be such that they could hardly be appreciated by most people. They are *your* pearls. Treasure them as such. Religion can be so personal and intimate that in most circumstances it would be as inappropriate to talk about it as it would be for a man to discuss the delicate and intimate experiences with his wife. I am not calling nice folk dogs and pigs, but even nice folk may be unable to appreciate one's personal communion with God. The holy ground of every man's heart should be held sacred by all the rest of us. We should not venture into such sacred confines anymore than we would barge into a couple's bedroom. If the marriage bed is holy so is a man's personal conscience.

This line of thought leaves me uneasy with any kind of imposition of our religion. Certainly we are to preach the gospel and win souls for Jesus, but this must be done in such a way that we do not insist that the end-product is a carbon copy of ourselves. Are we willing, for instance, for them to go to somebody else's church once we have converted them?

I am left uneasy by the tax-free status of billions of dollars of property held by the churches. Why should we impose our tax bill on the man down the block who happens not to care for our religion? Still he has to pay extra taxes and help support our way of believing. It is an imposition.

Life in the Spirit will make us increasingly sensitive to the rights and feelings of others, for the Spirit is the perfect gentleman.—*the Editor*

IN REPLY TO SOME QUESTIONS

The past several months have brought a number of questions from here and there that call for more than a personal reply, being matters of general interest. While our replies have to be brief, we trust they may prove helpful. —*the Editor*

Fellowship and Withdrawal

How can we be united when one binds a human opinion as if it were the law of God? What is opinion and what is doctrine? When is one to refuse to have fellowship with a brother and why?

You must speak out on these subjects and be clear cut about them. —Memphis, Tennessee

I take it that the first question is rhetorical in that it is asserting that the making of opinions into laws is divisive. But we are slow to see that this is what we have been doing all this time. We all have our opinions, of course, and this is all right. But it is not all right to insist that others conform to our way of seeing it before fellowship is possible. This may produce *conformity,* but not unity. It is important to remember that the demand for conformity is a very divisive practice. It is, indeed, what has divided us all these years.

The next question is most pertinent and I think the answer is easier than we have supposed, for practically speaking there is no difference between *opinion* and *doctrine.* It is easy enough for us to say that *doctrine* is the teaching of the scriptures; it is the *didache* (teaching as distinguished from *kerugma* (gospel). But in the final analysis what the scriptures *teach* becomes a matter of my own personal interpretation, and that is *opinion.*

There is, of course, a portion of scripture upon which there can hardly be different interpretations. They are the hard facts of history and biography. The story of the prodigal son is, for instance, a narrative that we all read alike insofar as the facts of the case are concerned. But when it comes to the *meaning* of the story, there will be differences of interpretation (or opinions). The way *you* interpret the story is Christian doctrine to *you,* and you would not consider it mere opinion. But I might say, "That's your opinion. Here's the way I see it," and my interpretation would be *doctrine* to me.

How can it be any other way unless we select someone or a committee to serve as the supreme court of interpretation for all the rest of us?

This leads us to the conclusion that *no* doctrine, which has to be our own interpretation of scripture, can be made a test of fellowship. This will make for the kind of diversity that is healthful and invigorating, for when we quit demanding conformity of views we will all learn from each other in a spirit of free inquiry.

The brother did not ask about the difference between doctrine and *faith,* which would be different. I would equate *the faith* with the gospel, which *is* the basis for fellowship—the only basis there is.

This position does not make doctrine unimportant. It only recognizes that we can never all be of one mind doctrinally, and that there is no indication that God ever intended it. The oneness we seek is in Christ, which is ours once we are called by the gospel and immersed into him. Once we are enrolled in the school of Jesus we will all be in different grades, with different insights, and different doctrines (or opinions). Have not dedicated Christians always had different ideas about the scriptures? I mean sincere and informed Christians. Can we really believe that it will not always be so? It is folly to suppose that we must see the scriptures alike before we can enjoy fellowship together. If so, we will never be united.

The third question implies a misinterpretation of the nature of fellowship (my opinion!—and that is why you do not have to agree with me for us to be one in Christ), for it suggests that fellowship is something at our disposal, to extend and withdraw as we please. It is rather a relationship, a partnership, a sharing of the common life because of our mutual ties with the Christ. It is only when one behaves in a way that it constitutes a denial or a rejection of that relationship that we can conclude that one is no longer in the fellowship of Jesus. By his behavior or his attitude he no longer shares the common life. I only have to recognize this. It does not come about by some act on my part, by my withdrawing it or by issuing some bull of excommunication, for the common life is not mine to extend or withhold.

The scriptures indicate that there are three conditions in which the shared life is repudiated: (1) In the case of the heretic, explained in Tit. 3:10; (2) in the case of the fornicator, who is not one who fell into sin through weakness, but who takes up immorality as a way of life in a shameless manner, as in 1 Cor. 5. What is included in such immorality is listed in verse 11, so the same would apply to all who so live; (3) in the case of one who repudiates Christ, rejecting his unique sonship, as in 2 John 9-10.

Quite obviously I have omitted cups, classes, Sunday School, premill, literature, lodges, pastor system, colleges, organs, societies, and all such as indications that the shared life (fellowship) is repudiated. We may differ on all these things, and even prefer a particular congregation because of our preferences, and still be one together and enjoy the blessings of the shared life. It is enough that we reject heretics, the immoral, and those who compromise the fact of Christ. Let us not reject our brother for who Christ died because he differs with us on our pet interpretations.

Role of Women

You made the comment "We have so subjected the woman's role as to have what is tantamount to a man's church." What do you mean and would you elaborate on this subject in a future issue of Restoration Review?
—Connecticut

The sister who asks this question goes on to say that she is interested in a restudy of the question of woman's role in the church, believing as she does that the subject has been badly neglected, but that it cannot be ignored much longer.

By saying that the Church of Christ is virtually a man's church I meant something like what the sister went on to say: that the woman's role is too subordinate, that her potential in the church's edification and outreach has been all but ignored. But I mean more than this, for I see the church failing to do what the world has long been doing: tapping the creative resources of women. They conduct much of the nation's business, control more than half its wealth, and are prominent in education, the arts, the theatre; and they are now making their way into science and government. But in the church, and especially among us, her role is that of spectator, unless perhaps she has a class of children to teach.

This is beginning to change with the emergence of "the new look" and the underground. Young women especially are going into the ghettoes to witness for Jesus. Women are now much more active in house meetings and prayer groups, and the working woman is finding her Christian profession even more relevant to the office than to the pew.

All this is, of course, part of the answer. But this, along with much more, is to be more encouraged. For example, the working girls in a congregation could have group meetings in which they share their experiences, and the congregation could in some way get involved. And surely we can find many ways to employ women's creative genius in furthering the kingdom of God.

Part of our hangup has been in the trappings of the institutional church. Once we return to the biblical concept of "the church in thy house" much of the problem will be solved. In the institutional church, which I see as *big* as well as traditional, our sisters are not merely kept subordinate, but even thwarted. It seems inappropriate for her to say or do anything in such assemblies. It is indeed awkward for *anyone* to say or do anything except those who occupy the pulpit, which is now often as large in area as some small chapels.

But what daughter is there in the home, around the family table, that cannot speak to the father, along with her brothers? What family circle is there where the girls do not have as much liberty as the boys in expressing

their views and exuding their enthusiasm?

We are all aware of the limitations that the scriptures place upon the woman, and these are to be duly respected, for they do indeed mean something. But while we have overacted to these passages, mixing them as we have with a Puritan view of women, we have grossly ignored others. It is clear enough from Rom. 16:1, Philip. 4:3, and 1 Tim. 3:11 that the women ministered in word and deed in the early church. We insist on having elders and deacons, but the primitive church had deaconesses as well.

I am optimistic about the future role of our women, however; not only because "You can't keep a good woman down," but because of the high esteem I have for our many dear sisters who are dedicated to the cause of Christ. I have long been suspicious that there will be more women in heaven than men. That, however, is not my main reason for wanting to go there!

CALL ME EARLY, CALL ME LATE

By ROBERT MEYERS

The telephone rang, buzzing like an angry bluebottle fly. He jumped to answer it, trying to smother the alien sound before it awakened the baby.

Sweetly querulous it came into his ear, the voice rising on the last syllable. "Brother Mintner?"

Not again; he thought, his patience splintering. He knew he had to be patient, that he could win no other way. He told his wife that every day. But when the calls piled up, his nerves frayed and he could not keep the edge out of his voice.

"Yes, this is he," he said rather abruptly, and then reminded his caller of her forgotten courtesy. "To whom am *I* speaking, please?"

"Oh this is Ernestine Booker. You don't know me (a half-apologetic high female voice, skittering on the edges of nervous laughter) I have heard about you, though. And your work over at Northside. And I just want to ask you a few questions, Brother Mintner."

He waited a second, trying to get a good grip on himself. Here it is again, he thought. Another one. Will they never stop?

"Yes?" he said.

"Well, I've heard some things about you and I just couldn't believe they were true of a Gospel Preacher. I mean, I didn't want to think hard of you till I knew for sure."

"I see. What are they?" But I know, he thought. I know the whole list. I know this oblique approach, too, this hiding behind the skirts of piety, this milky silky venom of a voice that murders in the name of Christianity.

"Well," she said, "do you just want me—well, what do you believe about the Bible?"

Take five minutes and tell me all about the Bible. Desert nomads and el Shaddai. Glueck and Albright. Acrostic poems in the Psalms. Paronomasia and double alliteration in the prophets. Lowth and Hebrew parallelism. Canaanite literature and resemblances to Semitic legend. Masoretic pointing. It flickered like heat lightning through his head even while his mouth was moving.

"Perhaps it would help you to ask a specific question," he said, trying to keep his voice from shaking. "I will try to give you specific answers."

She giggled, and tried to choke off the giggle. He could hear someone else in the room laugh. It was fun for them, two women, pinning a man to the wall with their questions, knowing he was forced by his profession to be polite and patient. He could almost feel over the wires a heady, intoxicating sense of power possessing them. How often were they able to play judges and executioners, he wondered? Nowhere else in all their lives except in this strange religion that gave them the power of ignorance.

"Do you believe the Bible is inspired?" she asked.

For a second he thought of asking her whether she meant a mechanical theory of verbal inspiration, or some sort of guidance from God without compulsion. He thought of the repetitions in Kings and Chronicles, of the variant tellings in the Synoptic Gospels, of the strange mysticism of the apocalyptic books, of the difficulties of translations, and of the obscurities of many texts. But it would never do.

"Yes, I believe in the inspiration of the Bible," he said. Thank heaven he could say that honestly, he thought. It was not his fault that she knew of only one concept of inspiration, her own.

"Well," she pressed him, "do you believe that Genesis and Job are inspired?"

"Yes," he said, "I believe they are." The rib, and Onan, and angels under the oak. Job and the curious debate cycles, with the doubling of all his blessings at the end. What could he say to her?

She was silent for a moment, expecting him to justify himself in some way. "Well," she said, "I didn't know, I just heard people talk about it. Now I can say that I asked you myself and you told me."

"That's right," he said.

"What about Jonah though," she urged, as if she had suddenly remembered with relief some accusation. "Is it true that you don't believe Jonah was in the belly of a whale?"

She was nudging him out onto thin ice now, he knew. Take away Jonah and the whale and the whole thing falls apart. He answered her carefully.

"I have said on occasion that the book of Jonah bears many of the characteristics of a Jewish parable. Some scholars have believed it was a parable, divorced from context. They have thought this for centuries. It is not a new idea."

She disregarded his last words. "Well, was he in the whale's belly or not?"

"If the story is literal," he said, trying to be patient but unsure how to say these things to her, "then he was certainly inside the whale. The question is whether the story is literal. As I said, there are many good reasons for taking it as a parable, designed to teach a most important truth—that God didn't want the Jews to be so exclusive in their religion."

But we haven't gotten the message, he thought bitterly. We are as exclusive as ever, whale's belly or no whale's belly! A cargo of rich and precious truth comes to us from God and we spend our lives debating about the vehicle in which it is carried.

"I don't understand what you mean," she said querulously. "It sounds to me like you're sort of unsound in your faith. After all the New Testament tells us about how Christ spoke of Jonah and if He believed that Jonah was in the whale's belly it looks to me like you ought to."

He tried to laugh indulgently but he failed. "All right," he said, "it's a rather complicated thing. I don't disbelieve in such a possibility, you see, nor doubt the power of God to do whatever He wants. It's just that the strangely inappropriate psalm in Chapter Two, and a lot of other things, make me wonder if I may be wrong to read this literally."

He could see, suddenly, just how her face looked as she heard this and he decided to change course. "Perhaps you'd enjoy reading the introductory articles on Jonah in something like the Anchor Bible or the International Critical Commentary or the Interpreter's Bible. If you would do that, then we could have a very profitable talk about this, I think."

"I never heard of those," she said. "But I've read my Bible pretty well during the past few years and I think I know what it teaches, Brother Mintner. I don't need sectarian commentaries and I think they're a mighty dangerous thing, personally."

"I'm sorry you feel that way," he said gently. But it upset him to know that what he really wanted to say was quite ungentle. Like, "Has it ever occurred to you, lady, what an arrogant creature you are, just about one micromillimeter under that sweetly pious skin of yours? You wouldn't know a critical commentary from the Sunday supplement, you've never wrestled hard with a textual problem in your life, but you feel perfectly capable of telling the world how it is!" But he dared not say it. He was supposed to be a nice man. He didn't want her to lose faith in that, too.

"Well, people are talking in the other congregations, Brother Mintner, and I sure hate to see The Cause hurt. I don't know why you can't make yourself clear. I know you've been in school a long time and everything, but it just seems to me like you have drifted away from the old paths and . . ."

Her voice droned on, saying the phrases he had heard for twenty-five years. He hardly listened anymore, knowing that the parroted phrases would only enrage him. When she had finished, he had gotten control of his voice and he spoke quietly to her.

"May I say to you that you are welcome to visit in our home and talk about these things. You could bring up whatever you liked then, and I'm sure we could understand one another better."

"Oh we're leaving town right away," she said. "We're moving to Canon City, Colorado."

He could not say what he was thinking. He said instead, "I suppose there is a Church of Christ there?"

"I think so," she said, "but I don't know anything about it. I hope it will be a Sound and Loyal Church."

He said he hoped it would be, and that he knew she would undoubtedly be a strong new influence upon it. She agreed, deprecating meanwhile her talents, and at last she hung up.

Two more calls, he thought, just two more and I'll crack. They know it, too. They know that you cannot be patient with them forever, and they simply wait until you break and then they become all injured piety and tell you that even if you *are* doctrinally unsound you can at least be humble and try to have the Christ-like spirit.

The top of his head was hammering painfully now and he knew he would have to get out of the house and walk for a while. It would not do to carry his frustration past the night's sleeping. Tomorrow was Sunday and all those hungry faces, hoping against hope, would be lifted to him.

READERS' EXCHANGE

Worthy of Attention

There are three publications among us, all relatively new, that deserve a wide circulation. We thought you would like to know about them, and perhaps lend a helping hand to the efforts. *Abide* is edited by Floyd Mackler, now a teacher at Southeastern Christian College, who may be contacted at 40 Fitch Ave., Winchester Ky. 40391. He is definitely one of our most perceptive writers and always writes stuff worth reading. There seems to be no subscription rate as such, but I suspect a dollar bill would bring it to you for a year.

Integrity, Box 1205, Flint, Michigan 48501, also has no sub rate, so a small contribution, or none at all, would bring it your way. It is issued by several young princes among us who have definitely crossed their Rubicon, and they show no intentions of turning back. Black and white make up the editorial staff. They mean business, those fellows do, and their writings show that they have fire in their eyes and love in their hearts. You are missing something.

More substantial in size and resources than the first two is *Communion Quester,* which also publishes no sub rate. The address is Caixa Postal 2610, Belo Horizonte, M. G., Brazil. Its masthead carries its purpose, as does the name, "A Move for Unity in the Body of Christ." Its editorial policy says it "provides an

open forum for testing ideas and expressing convictions without prejudice." It is especially concerned for the unity of all Restoration groups, about the only journal among us with such a precise and noble intention.

So if you are sometimes discouraged and suppose there is no hope for a more Christian tomorrow for the Restoration Movement and Churches of Christ, I suggest you let these journals recharge your battery. These fellows are not leaving, and they are in the thick of the fight for a more spiritual and responsible brotherhood.

Campus Evangelism Passes

News media of Churches of Christ are telling of the demise of Campus Evangelism, the *avant garde* organization that aroused almost as much antagonisms from the right as it did hope and encouragement on the left. Its most important work was in communicating with our young people through various means, one controversial way being annual seminars in hotels where Church of Christ religion took on a new look. We gave our favorable reaction to these episodes in these columns at various times.

Well, Campus Evangelism is dead, and various ones are lined up, not to deliver a dirge or eulogy, but to claim credit for its passing. Finances and opposition are the reasons given, and this must be correct; but surely some will say that God in his wrath brought it to a bitter end. Even after its death, some diatribes against it, late in being published, were calling upon parents to keep their children away from the hotel meetings. Ah, death can be sweet, but what will they fight now?

To those who chose to lay away the most controversial work among Churches of Christ in this decade we would like to give a word of congratulation for a job well done. You caused many of our people to think as they never did before, and you showed our young people what *can* be done when people act freely in Christ. The war in which Campus Evangelism died will be and is being won. All great victories come only after sacrifices are made and casualties occur. It is an honor to fall in battle. Too, it is more noble to die while alive and kicking than to be embalmed and kept propped up by party machinery. The scriptures speak of folk who are so given to pleasure that they are dead even when alive. Papers, colleges, churches, and organizations can all be dead even when in circulation. So on the tomb of Campus Evangelism we nobly inscribe *Died in Action.* The tombs of others will deserve no better than *At Last Dead Without Ever Really Living.*

Want a Challenge?

Occasionally someone writes us who wants to do something different and daring for the Lord. Not often, but sometimes. If you are such a one, then you should investigate the work of the Ridgewood congregation in Toledo, ministered to by Floyd Rose and others. They are cooperating with the Shiloh program that brings whites and blacks together in Christian work in the slums of Brooklyn and elsewhere. More than that (and here is where you might come in) they are encouraging white families to move to Toledo and help desegregate a black congregation and help in the work among the deprived in that city.

So, you would pull up stakes, move to Toledo, identify with a black congregation, get yourself a job, and go to work for Jesus—"black and white together." Write to Floyd Rose, Ridgewood Church of Christ, 1818 Ridgewood Ave., Toledo, Ohio 43608. Young people interested in working in the ghettoes and camps should write Rick Kilgore, Box 627, Mendham, N. J. 07945.

Unity Meet in Lubbock

The Fifth Annual Unity Forum will be held in Lubbock, July 2-4, on the campus of Lubbock Christian College. Sponsored by a committee of brethren of the non-class Churches of Christ, it is a continuation of unity gatherings that began at Bethany College in 1966. Last year it was conducted in West Islip, New York. Each year thus far it has been sponsored by a different group of the Restoration Movement. The theme in Lubbock will be *Unity Now!* The list of speakers is still tentative, but representative men have been invited. Emphasis is being placed on panel discussions and audience participation, with a free and open atmosphere. There will also be sharing services in which anyone will be free to express his views and concerns in a context of love and understanding.

Housing information and other data is available from Thomas Langford, 3703 48th St., Lubbock 79409.

Lubbock makes a good vacation spot, so why not plan for the time of your life?

Matters of Interest

A booklet will be appearing soon, published by Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, entitled *The Church of Christ and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit,* which will contain testimonies from spirit-filled Church of Christ men such as medical doctors, college professors, missionaries, ministers, industrialists, merchants, teachers, actors, executives, architects, etc., men of such stature that they cannot be dismissed casually. It is becoming such a momentous movement that any review of restoration will have to deal with this full-throated attack on the walls which continue to separate the Church of Christ from first century Christianity. Seven days around in silence, but then the trumpet! God's will be done to bring us all to Him.—*a Reader*

The booklet referred to is one of a series. There is one on the Baptists and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, one on the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, etc. We didn't think it would happen to us, did we? It is true that the list of those among us who have been so blessed by the Spirit is a pretentious one, and for the most part these people have not left us. They are staying to see if they cannot love us around to a more spiritual way of life. Good for them! The booklet should make interesting reading, and we will try to make it available to our readers. But the reader may be over-indulging when he suggests that such distinguished folk cannot be dismissed casually. I am afraid that that is exactly what will happen to them. They will be "dismissed," casually or otherwise. But we are finding it in-